



SOMERSET TOWN JOURNAL



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Election Day Is April 7

By Bonnie Thomson, Warwick Place

The annual Town of Somerset election will be held at the **Town Hall** on **Wednesday, April 7**. Polls will be open from **5:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.** Three incumbents are running: **Jeffrey Slavin** for Mayor, and **Cathy Pickar** and **Alan Proctor** for two Council seats. Statements

from the candidates are included in this issue of the **Town Journal**. Because the election is uncontested this year, a candidates' forum will not be held.

You must have been registered by **March 24th** to vote in this year's election. If you are registered in **Montgomery County** at your Somerset address, you are eligible to vote in the Town election. If you have any questions about whether you are registered to vote in Montgomery County, you can check your registration status at www.mdelections.org/voter-registration/status/. If you have any questions about voter qualifications or whether you are registered in the Town, call **Bonnie Thomson, Chair of the Board of Supervisors of Elections**, at **301-657-2923**.

Absentee ballots are now available at the Town Hall. Voters who wish to vote by absentee ballot must fill out an application. Applications can be downloaded from the Somerset website or obtained from the Town office, and should be returned to the office by mail or in person. Upon receipt of the application, the **Clerk-Treasurer** will issue an absentee ballot to the voter. In order for your absentee ballot to be counted, be sure to follow the instructions for signing and printing your name on the return envelope.

Applications for absentee ballots will not be accepted after **4:00 p.m.** on **April 7th**. Completed absentee ballots must be returned to the Town Hall by **4:15 p.m.** on Election Day, or delivered to election officials at the polls between 5:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. that evening.

Please note that the election board is not able to update the voter rolls in time to check the registration of each applicant prior to issuance of the absentee ballot. Voters should not assume that receipt of an absentee ballot means that they are currently registered. As always, the election board will check the registration of each absentee voter prior to placing his or her ballot in the ballot box.

Candidates' Statements

★ **Cathy Pickar**

It has been an honor to serve the Town of Somerset during the past two years as a **Council member**, and I look forward to the possibility of serving for another two years.

The years, however, have not been easy ones for government at any level. The challenge of making decisions during

continued on page 3



Calendar

Monday, April 5

Council Meeting

Wednesday, April 7

Election Day

Friday, April 16

Saturday, April 17

SES Book Sale

Saturday, April 24

Garlic and Mustard Challenge

Monday, March 29

Monday, April 26

MVA Mobile Office

Friday, April 30

Brown Bag Lunch

Don't forget to check the Town website throughout the month for an up-to-date calendar. Go to www.townofsomerset.com and click on **Town Calendar**.



On My Mind

By Mayor Jeffrey Slavin

Civility Reigns

Last month we held a **Special Town Meeting** so the Council could consider whether or not to take the next step with the bathhouse project and secure bids from contractors. While

the design had been approved many months ago and the planning process has gone on for years, it had been anticipated that this meeting could get “noisy” or **confrontational**. With the recent news that the Town’s income tax revenues have seriously declined, like everywhere else, some have started to question whether this is the right time to start such a project

Before the meeting began, I made a statement reviewing its purpose and thanking residents, staff, and the architects for getting us to this point. I stated that with **1100 residents**, there are probably no less than **3000 opinions** on how this should all come out, but I had also been impressed with the amount of respect we have shown one another to date about these thoughts.

I have been in many other potentially contentious situations in my thirty-five years working in and around government. I was slightly worried that this meeting could end up the same way.

However, I am pleased to report that this was not the case. As **Contract Officer**, Council member **Alan Proctor** laid out all the facts and gave a comprehensive report. It was also obvious that each Council member had done his or her homework. Because of this transparency and command of the facts, peoples’ fears seemed to be assuaged.

After the Council’s time on the agenda, I took the opportunity to give everyone in the room an opportunity to ask questions or state an opinion. It really seemed that those in the audience actually listened to each other and the amount of repetition was kept to a minimum. Needless to say, there were excellent arguments made on both sides of the issue.

In conclusion, I would say that in this case the process is working. Council members will benefit from all the input and these views will weigh heavily on their final decisions. Emotions will be kept low and the facts will be paramount. This is good news going forward.

Town Celebration Of Arbor & Earth Days

The Town will be celebrating **Arbor and Earth Days** by joining **Montgomery Parks** in its **Garlic Mustard Challenge** on **April 24, 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.** Garlic mustard, an invasive plant, grows near our creek. We need to revisit the three areas where we pulled this invasive last year. The plant’s seeds remain viable for five years.

In This Issue

Arbor & Earth Days	2
Candidates’ Statements	1
Council Activity	13
Election Day	1
Fire Department	9
Journal Guidelines	12
Kindergarten Registration	6
LED Streetlights	9
Legislation	13
Letters to the Editor	12
Mayor’s Desk	8
Obituary	11
On My Mind	2
Permits Granted	8
PNRC Meeting	10
Pool	7
Preliminary Agenda	14
Proposed FY-11 Budget	4
Security	10
SES Book Sale	3
Town Hall Tidbits	6
Town Trees	10
Trash Contract	5
Trash Preferences	7
Wind Power	11

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Maxine Finkelstein, Editor

Deadline for ads and copy is the 15th of the month at 4:30 p.m.

It's Book Sale Time At Somerset ES

By Elizabeth Hurwit, Dorset Avenue

Somerset Elementary School's Annual Used Book Sale is set



for **Friday, April 16**, from **7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.** and **Saturday, April 17**, from **9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.** in the **All Purpose Room** at the school. Stop by to browse and buy from a great selection of books. You'll find home-baked goodies for sale as well.

The Used Book Sale fundraiser is one of the school's most popular and successful events thanks to Somerset families and neighbors who generously donate **children's books, adult books (fiction and nonfiction), videos, games, audio tapes, cds, and dvds.** It's a great system—clean off your shelves, pass your books on to other readers, restock your shelves, and help raise money for the school.

The more you donate, the more successful the sale will be. **Donations** will be accepted in the All Purpose Room starting **Monday, April 12** through **Thursday, April 15.**

If possible, pack your books in strong cardboard boxes. If you'd like to give credit to a Somerset student for your contributions, mark his or her teacher's name on the box. The two classes that donate the most books to the Used Book Sale will be celebrated with an **ice cream party.**

We welcome volunteers who would like to help sort books or work at the sale. We sort books all week long, including Wednesday and Thursday nights from **6:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.** For additional information, please call **Cathleen Leipold** at **301-657-1946** or **Elizabeth Hurwit** at **301-652-0608.**

Statements from page 1

a time of shrinking resources, decisions that safely guide us through the short term, yet provide benefits and returns for the long term, requires time-consuming scrutiny, creativity and vision. And most important, the challenge requires the informed and constructive involvement of the residents. I have embraced this challenge with the understanding that my time is an investment in the community for all of us.

Two years ago I said that if elected to the Council I would make decisions that are informed by the need to preserve good community values:

- Respect for individual differences
- Sensitivity to balance between individual rights and community living
- Safety of our residents
- Recognition of the richness and needs of a multi-generational population
- Practice of fiscal responsibility
- Understanding of our relationship to the environment and the larger community around us

During the past two years, these values have been my guide and I am committed to responding to the challenge of serving our community through thoughtful work and open communication for another two years. I appreciate your support.

★ **Alan Proctor**



I ask for your support in seeking a second term on the Town Council to continue the progress we are making on a number of important initiatives and to address additional challenges and opportunities for our community.

In my first term on the Council, I've worked hard and effectively with the Mayor and other members of the Council to address what I see as key priorities of our community. **These include:**

- **Improving Town governance.** I have sought to further open up the Council's decision making, planning, budget, management, acquisition, and communication processes, to serve our community better and more cost-effectively.
- **Advancing the pool facility renovation project.** In the role of the Council's contract officer for the project, I have helped to keep the project on track with the requirements, budget, and timeframe for the planned project, and have made a special effort to keep the community informed and involved in the project as it has proceeded.
- **Pursuing environment goals in action.** I've worked hard to support initiatives to assure that the Town is progressive in its policies for dealing with environmental issues such as stormwater management and preservation of our trees; that when our streetlights are replaced, we get better, more environmentally-friendly, and more cost-effective streetlights; and that as we re-compete our refuse contract, that we get the best and most cost-effective package of service for residents along with support for recycling and other environmental goals.

continued on page 4

- **Managing Town budget and expenses.** I've been a hawk in opposing unnecessary tax increases and spending, and monitoring key elements of Town spending to assure that we manage resources wisely and cost-effectively.

We've made progress on all of these fronts, and I seek reelection in order to continue this work. At the same time, we have what I see as two additional areas of special challenge and opportunity to deal with, realigning our budget to the new environment and continuing to make the most of our community.

On the budget, we need to deal with the unpleasant but true reality that economic conditions have changed and that the Town is not likely to be able to sustain the extraordinarily low property taxes that near doubling of income tax revenues enabled over the past few years. I've personally opposed any increase in property taxes in the past few years because the Town did not need the revenue to meet core priorities, but this has changed and we need to come together on a plan for balancing revenues with costs of the services and other amenities we value.

I also think we have lots of unrealized opportunity for further deepening and extending our sense and value of community. Past planning exercises and surveys show that our sense of community is highly valued, and I'm eager to explore additional ways in which we realize it.



It has been a pleasure to represent all of you as the Town's Mayor for the past two years. I am proud of the progress that we have made together in the improvement of the delivery of services, increased and more precise communications, and the continuing efficient handling of residents' individual problems. I have been privileged to work with an excellent staff and dedicated citizen volunteers, all of whom are essential to Somerset's smooth operation. Most of all, I am grateful to every Council member for his or her part in making my first term successful by always being well prepared, taking seriously their oversight responsibilities, and being willing to take on major projects.

When I ran for Mayor in **2008** I promised to make three issues a priority. **I am happy about the results that have been achieved:** (1) The Council enacted a new traffic calming program that seems to be cutting down on speeding and stop sign violations, (2) with the help of the Council, and in particular Vice President **Marnie Shaul**, we have begun to professionalize our long-term budgeting so we will be best prepared to maintain our infrastructure, and (3) I have shepherded the decision making on the proposed bathhouse renovation to the point where the Council is on the verge of making final decisions.

If I am re-elected, among other things, I pledge to maintain **high accessibility**, help the Council develop a **formal procurement program**, cheerlead the Town into **being greener** and **more paperless**, and assist in the enactment of more **reasonable parking regulations**.

I hope that I have earned your vote on Wednesday, April 7 and will look forward to greeting each and every one of you at the polls on that evening.

Council Awaits Comments On Mayor's Proposed FY-11 Budget

By Mayor Jeffrey Slavin



At the **April Town Meeting**, as required under the **Charter**, I will be introducing the **FY-11 Budget**.

This document will be considered

by the Council in the form of an ordinance, on which final action will be taken on **May 3**. In the meantime, I have set aside a large block of time for the required public hearing on **April 5**, and I urge all interested residents to attend and testify. For those unable to be present, let me remind you that your calls and emails carry the same weight as a personal appearance. And while many of us read the **list_serv**, if you write a comment about Town expenditures through that form of communication, be sure to send us a copy at **www.townofsomerset.com** for our records.

Like governments all across the country, Somerset has experienced a steep **drop in income tax revenues**, and the challenge we face is to continue providing essential services without having to tax our citizens unnecessarily. I have tried to reflect this in my proposed budget, while at the same time looking at places where we can economize.

The budget is largely guided by the **Five-Year Plan**, which I submitted as required last month. While this Plan did not require Council approval, once again it does incorporate a number of suggestions that Council members have made. Likewise, the budget numbers reflect the collaborative effort between the Council and me as I have met and

continued on page 5

talked individually with them during the preparation period. In addition, I convened an exhaustive work session on **March 15** in which I gave a preview of the proposal and made corrections and revisions. Now, for the month of April, the Council will study the various line items, and perhaps make amendments in May when the final vote is taken.

As has been reported in this Journal for the past several months, income tax receipts, which traditionally have been our largest source of revenue, will be dropping over 40 percent since the last audited year. So while we received over **\$900,000** in FY-09, we are only projecting approximately **\$500,000** in the upcoming year. The new figure is based on information we received at a January meeting with the Comptroller's Office when a senior staff person gave us the dismal news.

At the same time, as we all know, our bathhouse is in serious need of repair and modernization. We have been through a public process for more than five years to come up with an environmentally friendly design. The Council is on the verge of making a final decision on a bid. My proposed budget incorporates a plan to pay for this project through a combination of an increased property tax rate and the institution of modest user fees for the pool. This was the only way to make the budget balance.

Because property tax rates were significantly cut in the recent past, the Town did not build up a contingency fund to cover the costs of this capital improvement. So now, with the unanticipated drop in income tax monies, the only recourse we have is to borrow funds and raise fees for the services we provide. These charges will all remain modest in comparison to market rates. In addition, my proposed **property tax rate of 8 cents** is low relative to similar municipalities in the area. Finally, under my proposal,

the Somerset property tax figure will still remain **less than 10 percent** of the average resident's overall property tax bill.

While there are ways we could economize further, (and this should be part of the discussion over the next month), such as by cutting police coverage in half, dropping trash service from twice to once a week, cutting legal expenses by taking on fewer new initiatives, going "paperless" on the Journal, etc., I feel that the numbers you will read in this Journal are bare bones but still maintain the required services for a high quality of life and a well-groomed Town.

Significantly, realizing that the bathhouse project is obviously a big ticket item, in order to be responsible about budgeting I have included a **\$600,000** contingency line to cover potential 10 percent cost overruns for the construction (**\$300,000**) and the possibility that piping at the pool needs replacement once the foundation is dug up (**also \$300,000**). This has a major impact on our budget numbers. But this contingency will be diminished greatly if the bathhouse project comes in at or under the contract price and we discover that the existing piping is sufficient. This is a goal that we will all work toward.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize again how important it is for all of you to read these documents carefully and send us your comments. If anyone would like the opportunity for a one-on-one explanation of anything contained in the numbers, please call or write me and I will be happy to meet with you. I want to thank our Clerk-Treasurer, **Tom Carter**, who acts as our **Chief Financial Officer** in this process and who once again did a wonderful job, and the hard work of the Council and committees to get us to this day.



Trash Contract

By Barbara Hoover, Environment Committee

As we know, Somerset's trash contract is up for renewal and the Town has received proposals from several vendors offering their services. Following a discussion at the last **Environment Committee meeting**, I would like to bring to your attention some important information the Town will consider before a new contract is signed.

One is the potential to move to **Single-Stream Recycling**. Over the past many years there has been an evolution in the types of materials collected in residential recycling programs and the ways those materials are collected curbside.

At present, Somerset is following the Dual-Stream Recycling program. Residents separate glass, bottles, jars and metal cans from all paper products in separate containers. Single-Stream Recycling allows residents to co-mingle all commodities (**paper as well as containers**) in one bin. Evidence suggests that Single-Stream Recycling sharply increases recycling numbers because of its ease and convenience. As more materials are targeted for collection, regular household trash becomes minimal, more resources are saved. The national trend is moving in the direction of Single-Stream collection programs, encouraging participation by even those who, until now, have been reluctant to separate.

A second issue is whether to continue trash pickup twice per week, or move to once-weekly pickup. While picking up trash once per week has environmental advantages, budget considerations will also affect this decision.

Some changes will be seen under any of the proposals the Town has received. For example, all bidders have offered the option of using large (**65 gal**) wheeled

continued on page 7

Town Hall Tidbits | By Tom Carter, Clerk-Treasurer



Final Reminder on State Tax Returns

Somerset's largest source of revenue is its share of the **State income tax** paid by Town residents. But Somerset will not get its share of income taxes unless its name appears on the Maryland income tax form in the box marked, "**City, Town or taxing area.**" Please make sure you fill out this box and the "**Maryland County**" box correctly so that both jurisdictions receive the proper payments from the State.

Form 502 MARYLAND RESIDENT INCOME TAX RETURN 2009

SOCIAL SECURITY # YOUR FIRST NAME LAST NAME

SPOUSE'S FIRST NAME LAST NAME

PRESENT ADDRESS (City and state) City or town State Zip Code

YOUR FILING STATUS: Single, Married filing jointly, Married filing separately, Head of household, Qualifying widow(er) with dependent child, Dependent taxpayer.

EXEMPTIONS: (A) Yourself, (B) Spouse, (C) Dependents, (D) Blind, (E) 65 or Over.

Town of Somerset Here

Several copies of the **grasscycling video** are available at the Town office for your use. The video demonstrates the benefits of leaving your grass clippings on the lawn. Please call **Tom** at **301-657-3211** if you would like to borrow one.

Somerset Quiet Hours

As the weather improves, don't forget **Town noise limitations** between the hours of **9:00 p.m.** and **9:00 a.m.** daily. This applies to noise from sources associated with residential living, such as **blowers, power mowers, and chain saws.**

The same hours apply to construction on **Saturdays and holidays**; that is, it may occur only between **9:00 a.m.** and **9:00 p.m.** On **weekdays**, it is legal to start at **7:00 a.m.** Only interior construction work that cannot be heard by neighbors is allowed on **Sundays.**

MVA Mobile Office

The MVA's **mobile office** will be in **Friendship Heights** on **March 29** and **April 26** from **10:00 a.m.** to **2:00 p.m.**

Kindergarten Registration

By Franny Peale, Uppingham Street

If you have a **child turning 5** by **September 1, 2010**, please contact the **Somerset ES office** now to be added to the kindergarten list so you may be placed on the schedule for registration and orientation.

Call **Somerset Elementary School** at **301-657-4985** between the hours of **9:00 a.m.** and **4:00 p.m.**

Registration and orientation sessions for entering kindergarteners and parents will be scheduled by the school for either **May 11th** or **May 12th, 2010**. Your schedule and registration materials will be sent to you in the middle of April.



Street Sweeping

Reilly Sweeping, Inc. will be in Town sweeping our streets starting about **9:00 a.m.** on **Wednesday, March 31**. Please park your vehicles in your driveways during the day so that they can get along all our gutters. This is a one-pass sweep, so the gutters where any cars are parked will not be swept later.



2010 Tennis ID Cards

Tennis ID cards for 2010 are available from **Tom** at the **Town Hall office**. Fees are still only **\$5 per family** for the annual card. Please make your checks out to "**Town of Somerset.**"

Batting Cage Annual Fees

Batting cage users are reminded that their annual fees of \$5 are due for continued use of the equipment.

Spring Cleanup

Spring cleanup has begun in Town. **Please remember the following:**

- Do not put your yard waste in **plastic bags**; use **paper bags** or **marked trash cans**. Place your cans or paper bags **on the curb**, not in the street.
- Do not dump your yard waste at the **Swimming Pool parking lot** or at the end of **Warwick Place**. Please remind your yard workers of this, too.

containers. Many people prefer the large bins for recycling paper, and they are easier to use if we decide to opt for the Single-Stream recycling program. However, the bids would allow residents to continue using the existing smaller bins if they prefer.

The new contract will also require the hauler to maintain records showing that recycled materials were in fact delivered to the appropriate recycling facility.

In addition to the three firms that submitted bids, the Town can also consider using **Montgomery County's** hauling service. The committee believes that the County's service deserves serious consideration if it is **cost-effective**. An objection to County service has been that it only picks up trash **once a week**; however, the Town may adopt that schedule in any case for cost reasons. Montgomery County still operates under the **Dual-Stream Recycling system**, but will be switching to the more efficient Single-Stream Recycling system within the next four or five years.

I wish to emphasize that the Environmental Committee's primary goal is to encourage responsible resource conservation and management while minimizing what goes into landfills, with an aim toward building a **ZERO WASTE** community.

Preferences On The New Trash Pick-up Contract?

By Council Member Marnie Shaul

At its April meeting the **Town Council** will be selecting a vendor for a **two-year contract** for **picking up Somerset's garbage, yard waste, and recyclables**. The contract has options for three one-year renewals under

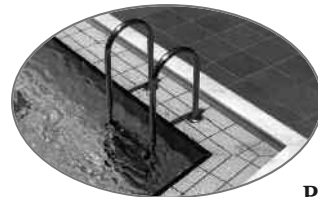
specific terms. In the November Town Journal, **George Wyeth**, Somerset's Environment Committee Co-Chair, and I each wrote about the kinds of things the Council might want to consider when it went out for bids on the new contract. **The Request for Proposal** contained these options for vendors to price out. The Council received bids from 3 vendors.

In making its decision, some of the items the Town Council will examine include:

- Having **once or twice a week pick up** of garbage and yard waste;
- Having all waste **picked up at the curb** or **having garbage picked up at the resident's preferred location**; and,
- Whether or not to have **fully co-mingled (single stream)** recycling where residents put all recyclable products, e.g., paper, glass, and plastic, into one disposal bin, and the material is sorted later at a recycling center.

The Council will also consider the costs associated with various options. In addition, the Council expects that the Environment Committee will make some recommendations for us to consider. It may also provide information about the County's program. An article from the Committee also appears in this month's Journal.

Individual Council Members have already heard from some residents, and we'd like to be sure that we are getting a good representation of residents' views. So, if you have strong preferences about how Somerset collects its trash, please let the Council know.



2010 Pool Season

By Barbara Condos, Chairperson, Pool Committee

In response to the Council's request that the **Pool Committee** make suggestions for cutting the pool operating budget by **10 percent**, the Committee recommended the following cost saving measures:

- The pool open **May 15** as scheduled
- While **Montgomery County** schools are in session, weekday hours start at **3:00 p.m.** rather than **1:00 p.m.**
- Participants in both **early morning swim** and **water aerobics** pay the cost of these programs
- The **extra pay allocated** for a manager be applicable only to **last year's manager** should he return
- That there is only **one category of member**, as defined in the Town Code
- The Council should consider the **daily per household operating cost** when setting guest fees
- The Committee recommended against the institution of **pool membership fees**

The swim team generously volunteered to reduce the cost allocated for the hiring of coaches by **\$2,000**.

The information and application form for those interested in working at the pool this summer can be found at www.georgetownaquatics.com.



By Mayor Jeffrey Slavin

Recent snows have brought to the forefront the need for us to define “**leyland cypress**” as it applies to the **Town Code**. A number of these cypresses fell in the past weeks, causing damage to property and other vegetation, including understory trees. In reading the Code, our Town Arborist **Barb Neal** believes that about **60 percent** of them are **multi-stemmed** and as such are not covered in the law. However, the remaining **40 percent**, being **singled-stemmed**, would

probably constitute a tree. She further notes that no horticulturist likes these plants, as they are notoriously short-lived and problematic (witness the tennis court hedge). She recommends automatically approving their removal—especially if the neighbors that are adjacent to the property have signed off on the removals and another tree is planted in their stead. In the future we are interpreting that a hedge of leylands constitutes “**one plant**” rather than many individual plants, so we won’t have to burden the Council on their removal, and we will avoid unnecessary regulation on our residents

We all realize that we have experienced one of the **worst winter snow seasons** in the last century, so it is no surprise that our **snow removal costs** for the recent group of storms have come in at least **\$100,000**. We are fortunate that our **Governor, Senators, and Congressman** are working with the feds to have the storm declared a disaster so that we might be eligible for some reimbursement.

It is not clear if all Somerset residents know that the Town Hall has an **emergency generator**, so for a defined period after a power failure the building has “**juice**.” During the unfortunate weekend when Somerset lacked electricity for about **36 hours**, I spent a lot of time in my office and fielded over **400 calls and emails** from residents seeking information and assistance. While I offered anyone the chance to stop by, make a phone call, or even spend the night camped out on the floor, only a few people came by—just to re-charge phones. I will ask the Council to set a policy about use of the Town Hall as a shelter, since nothing is apparently in place, and perhaps we can get boilerplate information from the County on how to operate such a program. During the worst weekend of the storms, **Montgomery County** opened a number of its buildings for this type of emergency use.

In **February**, in order to cut costs, we stopped sending the **Journal first class** and sent it by **bulk mail**. The Journal was received five days after it was actually delivered to the post office. I have talked to Editor **Maxine Finkelstein**, and every effort has been made to streamline the production process. If we wish to continue to mail bulk and save money, there are some changes to the Code that will be need to be made. In addition, Somerset may wish to explore, as Council member Cathy Pickar has suggested, home delivery of the publication

A resident asked recently about the duties of our “**Contract Officer**” on the bathhouse project, our own Council member **Alan Proctor**, because the title can be interpreted in different ways. In Somerset, our “C.O.” does not have the power to negotiate or sign contracts; rather he acts as the liaison to the architects group, attends meetings, and takes the lead in the manner similar to a committee chair. I am always glad when residents ask questions of this type because it shows they are paying attention to their government.

Permits Granted



The following permits were issued by the Mayor during the past month.
(Building permits are approved by the Town Council.)

Trees:

Judy Brocies, 4820 Cumberland Avenue, to remove a storm damaged Norway maple in her back yard.

Dabney Goold, 5812 Surrey Street, to remove one arborvitae and six Leyland cypresses that were downed by the snowstorms.

Anjali Kumar, 4605 Dorset Avenue, to remove a storm-damaged arborvitae hedge along her east property line and a dying pine tree in her back yard

Margaret Bowman, 5526 Trent Street, to remove a dying evergreen magnolia in her front yard.

Josh Bobeck, 5534 Warwick Place, to remove a storm-damaged arborvitae hedge in his back yard.

John Krynitsky, 4904 Cumberland Avenue, to remove two dead dogwoods, one in his front yard and one in the back.

Elizabeth Hurwit, 4521 Dorset Avenue, to remove two dying hemlocks, two dead crabapples, a dead redbud and a storm-damaged Leyland hedge, all in her back yard except one crabapple in the front.

Etsu Masaoka, 5406 Uppingham Street, to remove a storm-damaged Deodar cedar in her back yard.



Bethesda Fire Department Receives Life Saving Equipment From Community Donations

By Gail Werner, Surrey Street

Thanks to the generosity of Somerset residents and residents of surrounding areas, the **Bethesda Fire Department**, which is the first responder to fire and rescue emergencies in Somerset, has a new **LIFEPAK**. This lifesaving monitoring device will be used by **Bethesda Fire Station #6**, located at **Bradley Boulevard** and **Wisconsin Avenue**.

LIFEPAK is used in **life-threatening emergencies** or **acute traumas** such as **heart attacks, heart stoppage, or cessation of breathing**. This monitoring device has a **12-lead EKG, carbon monoxide and hemoglobin monitoring, and CPR metronome**, and is **40 percent faster, with 40 percent more memory**, than older models.

Using LIFEPAK, a patient will be monitored until received by a physician at **Montgomery County's Trauma Center at Suburban Hospital**. LIFEPAK is part of an ongoing commitment by the Bethesda Fire Department to ensure that firefighters and paramedics responding to fire or medical emergencies from its three Bethesda Stations have the best equipment available at all times.

The Bethesda Fire Department was established by a group of citizens in **1926** after a major fire destroyed several large homes. The Department's mission of saving lives has remained constant over the years. Our Volunteer Chiefs and Board Members provide day-to-day support to **Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Department operations**. Somerset is represented on the Board by **Gail Werner**. Somerset resident **Nat Finkelstein** is also on the Board as a member-at-large.



LED Streetlights—Pilot Is On!

By Mike Hill, Co-Chair, Environment Committee

On March 10, **Pepco** installed **ten LED streetlights** along **Dorset** (between **Little Falls Parkway** and **Surrey**) for us to assess whether we like them. This pilot will last six months.

If, at the end of the pilot we don't opt for LEDs or a similar alternative, Pepco will, at some point thereafter, replace our current mercury vapor lights with **High Pressure Sodium (HPS)** lights (as they are doing throughout most of the region). Pepco also installed three of the new HPS lights, roughly in the middle of the ten LEDs.

Four members of the Town's Environment Committee (**Jack Frink, Dave Kathan, Alan Proctor**, and I) have examined this issue closely. **Here are some of the high points:**

- LEDs are better for the environment. They use **half the amount of electricity** of HPS (and shrinking), and thus have half or less of HPS' carbon footprint;
- LEDs emit **less upward glare** into our homes and the night sky; and
- LEDs require much **less maintenance** (about 80 percent less).

Unless we confine our view to the near term, LEDs are also better economically. HPS lights would cost us roughly **\$15,000** more every year than LEDs, due to

HPS' higher electricity and maintenance demands. LEDs' higher capital costs would likely be recovered in five to seven years. Every year thereafter, and for perhaps decades to come, we would have net savings of roughly **\$15,000** (and likely more in later years). Moreover, through financing we may be able to spread the upfront costs so that all of our future payments are below what we would pay for HPS.

The big "if"—and the purpose of the Pilot—is appearance. While studies across the U.S. suggest that most people prefer the look of LEDs (or don't notice the difference), the best data source for our Town is ourselves. So look at the pilot LEDs (there are two types) and let us know what you think (preferably nicely). You can e-mail me with questions or comments at (mhill@hillkehne.com), and you can also contact Pepco via LED@pepco.com. Of course, you can also tell our **Council members** and **Mayor** what you think. The **Environment Committee** may also propose to the Council some sort of poll so the information the Council receives is not slanted toward the vocal few.

There remain other "ifs" as well, including: (1) whether Pepco's **as-yet-unset-tariffs** for LEDs will, in fact, let Somerset realize the full savings from LEDs; (2) what the specific **upfront costs** of LEDs would be (again, much of that depends on Pepco and how much we would have to pay them to install and maintain our own lights); and (3) what sort of **financing alternatives** exist.

We'll continue to pursue clear answers to those questions during the six-month life of the pilot. With that, plus your input on the look of the LEDs, the Council and Mayor should be in a good position to make an informed decision at the pilot's conclusion.

Landscaping For Home Security

By Birdie Pieczenik, Chairperson
Security Committee



Spring is just around the corner, and typically, so is an increase in crime from **scam artists** trying to distract you while you are planting, and strangers cruising the area as if they were part of contracting teams or solicitors for worthy causes. This month's security tips will focus on how the right kind of landscaping can be part of your home security plan.

Somerset almost never has home or garage break-ins. So the following list is being printed not because of crime that has happened in the past, but in order to maintain our low crime statistics.

- Keep trees **trimmed back**, away from your house, so that tree branches can't be used as a ladder if they are next to a window or skylight.
- Keep your lawn **mowed regularly**, especially when you are on vacation. An unmowed lawn can suggest that the residents of the house are away.
- Store ladders, lawn chairs, and patio tables **out of sight** so that they won't be thought of as a means to reach high windows.
- Keep shrubs that grow near door and walkways **trimmed** to three feet or shorter so that no one can hide behind them.
- Consider planting **low-growing** thorny bushes under windows (for example, Hawthorne, Rose Shrub, or Barberry)
- Consider keeping all trees and shrubs **trimmed back** enough to allow a clear view of the outside of your house. You might lose some

privacy, but neighbors can help watch who is coming into and going from your house.

- Keep your yard **well lit**. Consider installing motion detectors, timers, or body heat-triggered sensors.

Happy planting for home security and deterring intruders!

Criminal Events Reported:

February – Two acts of car vandalism during the night on the last weekend of the month.

PNRC Meeting On Town Monoculture

Corrie Morsey, Chair, Parks and Natural Resources Committee, Barb Neal, Town Arborist, and Barbara Zeughauser, Council member

On **March 10, 2010**, the **Parks and Natural Resources Committee** (PNRC) sponsored a meeting at the Town Hall with the Town's arborist, **Barb Neal**. During the meeting, Barb explained in detail the different views of urban foresters for planting plans for towns. In addition, Barb expressed her own thoughts, highlighting the benefit of using native trees, maintaining a large tree canopy, and encouraging residents to plant large trees in their own yards. Several topics of interest were raised, including the options for planting trees under utility lines (particularly along **Dorset**), the goals of the PNRC, and whether or not the Town is committed to the current monoculture plan or if improvements can be made.

The next meeting of the PNRC will be in **April**. Once a date is selected, the date and time will be announced on the Town's broadcast email system and posted on the bulletin board at the Town Hall. In the meantime, please visit the Town web site, www.townofsomerset.com, and on the home page click on the link to **Monoculture thoughts, drawn up by Barb Neal**, and corresponding links to the **Charts for Street Tree Percentages** and **Family Diversity in Town of Somerset** for additional information.

As always, we value the input of our residents and we encourage anyone interested to attend the next PNRC meeting in April. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at jimcormor@aol.com.

New Street Trees To Be Planted

The following are trees and locations to be planted this spring. A stake will be placed in the proposed planting site prior to installation. Please direct any questions to **Corrie** at the Town Hall.

Red Sunset Red Maple	4903 Falstone
Scarlet Oak	4815 Essex Essex side 5604 Surrey
Willow Oak	4905 Cumberland 4914 Dorset 4918 Dorset
Yoshino Cherry	4715 Trent Court

Save Money and Help the Environment By Signing Up for Wind Power Today

By Janet Lowenthal, Deal Place



By default, your home gets its electricity from a mix of coal and nuclear power. Relying on these energy sources puts about **1,500 pounds** of carbon dioxide (the equivalent of four cars on the road) into the atmosphere each year. **Maryland** residents now have a greener and cheaper alternative.

You can reduce your monthly electric bill and your home's carbon footprint in less than three minutes, with one simple step: sign up today to purchase some (50 percent) or all (100 percent) of your electricity in the form of clean, renewable wind power.

Somerset's Environment Committee urges all of us to sign up for wind power now.

Two companies, **Clean Currents** and **Washington Gas Energy Services** (WGES), offer this opportunity. At today's prices per kilowatt hour of wind energy, you can expect savings of **\$5 to \$10 dollars** per month. **Here are the comparative prices:**

Clean Currents	50%	100%
1 year contract	10.50	11.20
2 year contract	10.50	11.20
WGES	50%	100%
1 year contract	11.30	12.50
2 year contract	11.20	12.40

Pepco: 12.3 (an average of summer and winter rates)

In the case of both Clean Currents and WGES, these rates are locked in for the duration of the contract. (This is not the case with **Pepco**) There are no sign-up or switching fees, and you will continue to receive only one comprehensive electric bill.

In addition, Clean Currents has launched its own **Green Neighborhood Challenge:** for every home that signs up, Clean Currents will **donate \$10** for a community "**greening project.**" (If you have previously signed up, Clean Currents will contribute **\$10 retroactively.**) The Challenge goes until **June 30th** and many local communities are already participating. In Somerset's case, the donations from Clean Currents could be allocated in various ways, e.g., making the Town Hall more energy efficient, planting new trees, or planting a rain garden.

How to Sign Up for Clean Currents: Go to **www.CleanCurrents.com**, click on "**Wind Power for Home,**" scroll down to "**Click here to enroll for Wind Power,**" choose the service offering you prefer, and then complete the sign-up. Remember to enter "**Town of Somerset**" where indicated.

How to Sign Up for WGES: Go to **www.wges.com** and sign up in the box that says "**New Customers.**" The directions are self-explanatory from there.

This is a win-win situation: lower bills for you, a cleaner environment for us all. Contact me if you have questions (**Janet.Jim@Verizon.net** or **301-656-7666**), and let me know when you have signed up (or if you have done so already) so I can keep a running total and provide an update next month.

Obituary



We Remember

**Mrs.
Hildegard
Elisabet
(Henn)
Wachob**

Mrs. Hildegard Elisabet (Henn) Wachob, 81, a longtime resident of Somerset, died on **February 14** in **Westwood, Massachusetts** as a result of complications of **Parkinson's disease** and **spinal cancer**. Her peaceful passing occurred in the presence of her family, who had maintained a vigil in the final days of her courageous life.

Born in **Breitenau, Germany**, Mrs. Wachob lived in **England** and **Switzerland** before marrying **James R. Wachob**, a member of the **U.S. Foreign Service**, whom she accompanied on assignments in **Europe** and **Africa** from **1956 to 1984**. She was employed in the **American embassy in Prague** and in the **American Consulate in Frankfurt** during her husband's assignment in those cities. She was engaged in local community welfare activities during her family's residence in the **Central African Republic** and in the **Kingdom of Swaziland**.

Mrs. Wachob enjoyed gardening and served in several capacities at **St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church in Bethesda, MD**.

She is survived by her husband James of 54 years; her daughter **Juanita Kingsley of Dedham, MA**; her son **Richard Wachob of Westwood, MA**; and three grandchildren.





Letters to the Editor

Correction:

In the **February** edition of the Town Journal, a letter written by **Mike Cowie** was incorrectly attributed to his wife, Bridget. The editor sincerely apologizes for any inconvenience caused by this error.

Journal Guidelines

- Deadline (designated by editor) is 4:30 p.m. on the 15th of each month. Articles submitted after the deadline might not be included in that month's Journal.
- Maximum length of articles by individual Council members and committee members, 500 words per issue.
- Research and information articles assigned by the Council or the Mayor can moderately exceed the 500 word limit in order to present complete information.
- Maximum length of obituaries and unsolicited articles by residents, 300 words.
- Maximum length of Letters to the Editor, 150 words.
- There is no promotion or advertisement of business or commercial interests within Journal articles, with the exception of Classified ads.
- Classified ads must be placed by a resident and contain resident's phone number.
- The Editor will exercise judgment on article length and appropriateness (Town Code grants authority to Editor for final decisions). The Editor may review changes to articles with author if time permits.
- The Publisher (the Mayor) authorizes final publication of the Journal.

Submission requirements for Journal:

- All items to be included in the Journal must be sent directly to Editor and must conform to the word limits outlined above.
- MSWord or text format by email, or typed and delivered.
- All inserts, artwork, and inclusions come through Editor to go to printer all at the same time.
- Changes to articles submitted after deadline at the discretion of the Editor.
- Documents should be submitted with no formatting, meaning:
 - All single spaced
 - Times New Roman typeface, 12 pt.
 - All paragraphs left block, including headings
 - No arbitrary punctuation
 - Double space (using enter) after paragraphs (not automatic double-spacing)
 - Any special treatment or emphasis within articles should be noted in a side note for the Editor

Editor will be happy to guide contributors in setting up their computer options to conform to formatting guidelines, or to offer guidance in preparing articles for submission.

Legislation

No new legislation at the March 1 meeting.

Council Activity

At the March 1 meeting, the Town Council:

1. Approved the minutes of the February 1 regular and February 22 special meetings with corrections.
2. Received nominations from the floor for Jeffrey Slavin for Mayor and Alan Proctor and Cathy Pickar for Council members.
3. Heard the Mayor's proposed 5-Year Plan.
4. Approved a building permit for Dan Hirsch and Brenda Gruss, 4901 Dorset Avenue, to add a screened porch on the existing deck at the rear of their house and a detached shed in their back yard, subject to receipt of a County permit and Town fees and deposit.
5. Approved a building permit with side setback waiver and a tree removal permit for Dina Levine, 4807 Falstone Avenue, to add an 8' deep, two-story addition to the rear of their house, modify the front and remove one tree, subject to receipt of a County permit, Town fees and deposit, replacement of three trees and compliance with the tree protection plan.
6. Postponed action on a refuse/recycling contract until the April meeting and sent the bids to the Environmental Committee for their recommendation.
7. Took no action regarding proposed amendments to the pool management contract for the 2010 season.
9. Postponed action on the replacement of temporary speed humps at Dorset/Warwick Place and Essex/Warwick Place intersections that were damaged by the plows during the snowstorms.
10. Approved a contract with VIKa for up to \$10,600 to delineate the wetland surrounding the pool, process the wetland permit and prepare final forest conservation plan with Alan Proctor verifying the \$6,000 and \$3,500 amounts for the two items in question.
11. Accepted a \$7,000 EmPower EECBG sub-grant from the State for use in energy related projects.
12. Proclaimed April 1 as 2010 Arbor Day for the Town.
13. Postponed action on the Mayor's nominations to Security Committee until the April meeting.

Preliminary Agenda

Regular Meeting of Town Council

Monday, April 5, 2010 – 7:30 p.m.

Work Session of Town Council

Review of Council Follow-up List – 7:00 p.m.



left to right: Council members Bill Farley, Barbara Zeughauser, Cathy Pickar, Vice President Marnie Shaul, Alan Proctor

Regular Meeting of Town Council

1. Approval of minutes of the March 1 regular and March 15 special meetings and March 15 work session – 7:30 p.m.
2. Discussion of financial report – 7:35 p.m.
3. Suggestions and questions from residents – 7:40 p.m.
4. Public hearing on Mayor Slavin's proposed budget and property tax rates for FY-11 – 7:50 p.m.**
5. Action on refuse and recycling contract – 8:50 p.m.**
6. Fact finding hearing and action on application by Jim and Maura Vanderzon, 4902 Falstone Avenue, to add a one-story addition to the rear, a three-foot bump out to the front and level the roof – 9:10 p.m.
7. Fact finding hearing and action on application by James Gibson, 5603 Surrey Street, to demolish the existing house, build a 2½-story house with two-car detached garage in the rear and remove six trees – 9:25 p.m.
8. Action on application by Josh Freeman and Kathy Toomey, 5702 Warwick Place, to remove two hemlock hedges and three dogwoods – 9:40 p.m.
9. Action on contract for replacement of temporary speed humps at Dorset/Warwick Place and Essex/Warwick Place intersections – 9:50 p.m.
10. Introduction of Town Code amendments to increase permitting fees – 10:00 p.m.
11. Action on Town Arborist's request to remove a dying silver maple, #852, Capello Park, and a badly damaged Bradford pear, #588, 5816 Surrey Street – 10:10 p.m.
12. Mayor's report – 10:15 p.m.
13. Update on pool renovation – 10:20 p.m.**
14. Adjournment – 10:30 p.m.

This is a preliminary agenda prepared to meet the Journal press deadline, which typically is two weeks prior to the next Town Council meeting. During this period there will likely be changes to the timing of items, and some items may be added or deleted. Please consult the bulletin board on the Town Hall porch or the Town web site for the most up-to-date agenda.

Residents who wish to be present for a particular agenda item are advised to arrive 15 minutes ahead of the item's scheduled discussion time as discussion sometimes run ahead of schedule.

Items marked ** have related articles inside this issue of the Town Journal.